



File Code: 1950
Date: June 14, 2021

Friends and Neighbors of the Idaho Panhandle National Forests

We have prepared an environmental assessment, draft decision and finding of no significant impact for the Scattered Lands Project. The Scattered Lands project area is located within Bonner County, Idaho on the Sandpoint Ranger District of the Idaho Panhandle National Forests. The project area is south of the Pend Oreille River, west of Lake Pend Oreille and adjacent to the State of Washington state line. This project is being completed using the Healthy Forest Restoration Act and Good Neighbor Authority. I have decided to implement the **proposed action** (the selected alternative) as summarized below and explained in detail in the environmental assessment (pages 11 to 27).

We appreciate all the input we have received during the planning and analysis phases of this project. Your comments have been helpful in project design and in selecting this draft decision. A copy of the draft decision and environmental assessment, along with other supporting documents are available on the project website at: <https://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=58631>.

About this Project

The landscape within the project area exhibits a different pattern of forest cover and vegetation structure types compared to what historically existed there. These changes, due to past management practices such as fire suppression and logging, have altered the natural succession of the forest. Also, they have affected the normal functioning of ecological processes, such as fire, insects, and disease relationships. As such, the primary purpose of this project is to decrease the quantity and modify the arrangement of hazardous forest fuels to reduce the current and future wildfire risk to people, private lands, and resource values.

The proposed action integrates fuels and harvest treatments to maximize the effectiveness of treatments to reduce the risk of landscape-level disturbance and increase forest resiliency to insect and disease. The proposed action will treat approximately 7,000 acres. The proposed action includes approximately 3,100 acres of fuels only treatments. Treatments include slash and machine piling (masticating), slash and hand piling, and underburning (prescribed burning). Also, under the proposed action, approximately 3,900 acres would be treated with commercial timber removal, and tree planting would occur over approximately 3,500 of the harvested acres. Commercial harvesting would occur by seed tree with reserves, shelterwood with reserves, and clear-cut with reserves. These treatments are described in more detail in the environmental assessment and summarized in this decision notice, along with the connected actions associated with the road maintenance and transportation needs associated with the haul routes.

The proposed action also includes project design features, which are an integral part of this project and are required during implementation. The design features are intended to



avoid, minimize, rectify, reduce, eliminate, or compensate project impacts. These design features are in addition to best management practices.

The Scattered Lands environmental assessment and decision document the project's compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, including public involvement and tribal consultation on issues of national heritage.

Pre-decisional Administrative Review (Objection) Process

This decision is subject to the objection process pursuant to 36 CFR 218, subparts A and C. A written objection must be submitted to the reviewing officer within 30 calendar days following publication of the legal notice of the objection period in the *Coeur d'Alene Press*, which is the newspaper of record. It is the responsibility of objectors to ensure their objections are received in a timely manner (36 CFR 218.9(a)). The publication date in the newspaper of record is the exclusive means for calculating the time to file an objection. Objectors should not rely upon time requirements provided by any other source.

Objections will only be accepted from those who have previously submitted specific written comments regarding the project during the scoping and opportunity for comment periods in accordance with §218.5(a). Issues raised in objections must be based on previously submitted specific written comments regarding the proposed project unless based on new information arising after the designated comment opportunities.

The objection must contain the minimum content requirements specified in §218.8(d) and incorporation of documents by reference is permitted only as provided in §218.8(b). It is the objector's responsibility to ensure timely filing of a written objection with the reviewing officer pursuant to §218.9. All objections are available for public inspection during and after the objection process.

The following address should be used for objections:

Objection Reviewing Officer
USDA Forest Service, Northern Region
26 Fort Missoula Road
Missoula, MT 59804

Electronic objections must be submitted via an email to appeals-northern-regional-office@usda.gov. If you are unable to submit electronic, fax, or postal objections and must submit them by hand to the Northern Regional Office, please refer to signage at the front door regarding the delivery of hand delivered items, which will include a phone number to arrange delivery of your objection. *In keeping with precautionary measures related to the COVID-19 pandemic, the office is not open at this time for hand-delivered submissions.* For FAX and e-mail, include "Scattered Lands Project Objection" in the subject line. Electronic objections must be submitted in Microsoft Word (.doc or .docx) or rich text format (.rtf) or other format that can be read with optical character recognition software.

The objection must meet the content requirements of 36 CFR 218.8(d), and include the following information:

- The objector's name and address, with a telephone number or email address, if available;
- A signature or other verification of authorship upon request (a scanned signature for email may be filed with the objection);
- When multiple names are listed on an objection, identification of the lead objector as defined in 36 CFR 218.2 (verification of the identity of the lead objector shall be provided upon request);
- The name of the project being objected to, the name and title of the responsible official, and the name of the national forest on which the project will be implemented;
- A description of those aspects of the project addressed by the objection, including specific issues related to the project and, if applicable, how the objector believes the environmental analysis or draft decision specifically violates law, regulation, or policy; suggested remedies that would resolve the objection; and supporting reasons for the reviewing officer to consider;
- A statement that demonstrates the connection between prior specific written comments on the particular project or activity and the content of the objection, unless the objection concerns an issue that arose after the designated opportunity for formal comment.

Incomplete responses to these requirements make review of an objection difficult and are conditions under which the reviewing officer may set aside an objection pursuant to 36 CFR 218.10.

When objections are filed, approval of project activities will not occur until the pre-decisional review process is complete and a final decision notice issued. A decision will not be signed until the reviewing officer has responded in writing to all pending objections, and all concerns and instructions identified by the reviewing officer in the objection response have been addressed. All objections are available for public inspection during and after the objection process.

Implementation Date

If no objections are filed within the 30-day time period, implementation of the decision may occur on, but not before the fifth business day following the end of the objection filing period. When objections are filed, implementation may not occur until the objection reviewing officer has responded in writing to all objections and the responsible official has complied with any written instructions identified by the reviewing officer. Implementation is anticipated to start no later than October 2021.

Where to Get More Information

For further information concerning the Scattered Lands Project, contact Sara Sink, fuels specialists at 208-443-6834 or sara.sink@usda.gov; or, Jennie O'Connor Card, team leader at 406-589-7060 or jennifer.card@usda.gov during normal business hours.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Jessie Berner", is written over a solid horizontal line. A small "X" is marked on the line to the left of the signature.

JESSIE BERNER
District Ranger